



CCO BRIEF ON TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE
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I. Introduction

Transport and communications are widely acknowledged as fundamental enablers of economic growth, regional integration and social development. In this regard, it is assumed that these sectors in coherence hold a dual responsibility; enhancing and facilitating cross-border trade and connectivity while ensuring inclusive access to basic services and opportunities for all people at the same time. This facilitation leads to an increase in the efficiency of transportation systems; thereby, connecting producers with consumers, reducing production costs, and improving market accessibility.

Considering nearly 25 percent of the world population from OIC Member Countries, the share of OIC in global merchandise trade stands at 11-12 percent due to constraints in transport and logistics¹. According to the World Bank's "*Logistic Performance Index (LPI)*", most of the OIC Member Countries perform below the world average, highlighting persistent challenges in customs, infrastructure, operational efficiency, tracking and tracing systems. Although the OIC Member Countries have more extensive road networks relative to GDP in comparison to the US and EU averages², there is a gap in rail infrastructure development between OIC Member Countries, which reflects the disparities in investment priorities, geographic needs and economic conditions³. These figures, taken together, show the necessity for feasible investment, enhanced regional coordination and improved efficiency in the transport sector.

Within this broader context, rural accessibility is a cornerstone to sustain coherence and integration in transport systems. Taking into consideration that nearly half of the OIC population is settled in rural areas, adequate transport infrastructure is fundamental for accessing basic services such as education, healthcare, markets and employment opportunities⁴ for the rural population rather than serving merely as a facilitator of commerce.

In low-income countries, approximately 40 percent of the rural population has access to all-season roads⁵. Moreover, the figure ranges between 30-50 percent in terms of OIC Member Countries while the RAI score of OECD Countries is significantly higher⁶. However, efficient rural transport planning and improved rural roads can lead to a remarkable deduction in poverty rates by approximately 5% through increased agricultural output, reduced transport costs, and better access to services in several researches⁷.

¹ OIC Statistical Outlook, 2023

² World Bank, 2024

³ World Bank World Development Indicators

⁴ OIC Statistical Yearbook, 2023

⁵ An "all-season road" is defined as a road that is motorable all year round by the prevailing means of rural transport by the UN.

⁶ World Bank, Rural Accessibility Index

⁷ Shahidur R. Khandker, Zahed Bakht, and Gayatri B. Koolwal, "The Poverty Impact of Rural Roads: Evidence from Bangladesh," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 57, no. 4 (2009): 685–722.

Therefore, enhancing and sustaining rural accessibility has transformative potential in a sense. That is, investing and sustaining maintenance of all-season roads can lead to an eventual raise of the Rural Accessibility Index, thereby, reducing inequality and creating new opportunities for rural population as well as contributing stability and resilience.

Recognizing the importance of the issue, the COMCEC Transport and Communications Working Group (TCWG) has devoted its 24th and 25th Meetings to “Enhancing and Sustaining Rural Accessibility in the OIC Member Countries”. Improving the cooperation among the Member Countries on this theme through sharing experiences and the successful practices would directly contribute to the realization of related output areas of the COMCEC Strategy.

II. Transport and Communications Cooperation under the COMCEC

Improving the functioning, effectiveness, and sustainability of transport and communications in the Member Countries is the main objective of the COMCEC Strategy in the field of transport and communications. Within this framework, since the 40th COMCEC Session, the COMCEC TCWG elaborated on enhancing and sustaining rural accessibility in its 24th and 25th Meetings.

A. Enhancing and Sustaining Rural Accessibility in the OIC Member Countries (24th and 25th Meetings of the COMCEC Transport and Communications Working Group)

The 24th Meeting of COMCEC TCWG was held in virtual-only format on 24 April 2025, and the 25th Meeting of COMCEC Transport and Communications Working Group was held on 17-18 September 2025 in Ankara. These two consecutive meetings elaborated on the theme of “Enhancing and Sustaining Rural Accessibility in the OIC Member Countries”.

In order to deepen and enrich the discussions during the abovementioned meetings, a Policy Guide with the same theme has been prepared. While the preliminary findings of the Guide were submitted to the 24th TCWG meeting, the final version of the Guide was submitted to the 25th TCWG Meeting. The Guide provided a conceptual framework and examined good practices, innovative approaches and successful initiatives in enhancing and sustaining rural accessibility in the OIC Member Countries. In addition to the desk-based case studies examining Türkiye, Canada and Australia, the Guide also includes a detailed analysis based on in-depth research in the selected Member Countries, namely Indonesia and Morocco.

Through a comprehensive conceptual framework, in-depth field and desk-based studies, and a useful and applicable road map in Rural Accessibility for the Member Countries, the guide offers insight into this field by highlighting the successful practices and certain challenges that Member Countries have faced in this process.

In light of the main findings of the guide and the deliberations during the meetings, the 25th Meeting of the COMCEC TCWG has come up with the following policy recommendations:

- *Developing a long-term national strategy institutionalizing crosssector coordination and multi-level governance for transport investments to increase rural accessibility with a view of socio-economic development.*
- *Integrating rural connectivity targets (i.e all-weather road access, market access, public transport coverage) into national transport policies and sector plans by ensuring balanced infrastructure development, high-level commitment and fostering cross sectoral support.*
- *Utilizing data-driven mapping and decision-support tools to identify needs and gaps for evidence-based rural accessibility planning to prioritize investments based on socio-economic impact analysis.*
- *Introducing dedicated funding streams and cost-sharing models through leveraging alternative mechanisms such as public-private partnerships or community contributions to enhance rural accessibility.*
- *Promoting sustainable operational monitoring and maintenance by introducing effective feedback channels based on social inclusion and service delivery metrics, alongside infrastructure monitoring to support continuous rural development.*

All the documents including the Guide and presentations made during the WG Meetings are available on the COMCEC website. (www.comcec.org)

B. The COMCEC Project Funding Mechanism

COMCEC Project Funding (CPF) is the other important instrument of the Strategy. Projects financed under the CPF need to serve cooperation among member counties and should be designed in accordance with the objectives and the expected outcomes defined by the Strategy in the transport and communication section. Projects also play important roles in the realization of the policy recommendations formulated by the member countries during the TCWG meetings.

In 2025, the project titled “Strengthening Human and Institutional Capacity for Data Identification, Analysis, and Monitoring to Track Transport Sector Emissions in The Gambia and OIC Countries” was implemented by The Gambia in partnership with four beneficiary countries. The project aimed at enhancing human and institutional capacity in The Gambia and selected OIC countries to develop robust systems for monitoring transport-sector emissions.



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